

Speech of **Mr Toomas Kivimägi**, Head of the IPU Estonia group at the General Debate “*Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world*”

145th IPU Assembly, Kigali, Rwanda

Madam Chair, dear colleagues, honourable hosts!

Equality between men and women is an essential issue without any doubts, BUT it should not be a thing in itself or an aim in itself. Because, let’s not forget: men and women are DIFFERENT and thank God for that. As a result of that men and women behave differently in different situations, like crises and conflicts, for example. Without relying on specific scientific evidence, it can still be argued that a higher proportion of women in parliaments is an **additional guarantee for peace and a happy future**. Women value both peace and happiness more highly than men and are generally more peaceful. In this context, the focus of the Assembly is more than relevant in today’s conflict-ridden world.

However, it must be acknowledged that the road to achieving a reasonable balance is long, both in politics and in many other areas. It is important to create **preconditions for equal opportunities**, for example, for standing as a candidate. It is important **to remove obstacles** (including both administrative and material) that create conditions for unequal treatment in politics, employment or social life.

At the turn of the century, a well-known Irish futurologist Charles Handy said at the Management Conference held in my hometown Pärnu that during the last 25 years, the world had changed a lot, but it was likely to change even more in

the next 25 years. The last 22 years have repeatedly confirmed this. Without a doubt, exactly the same words are relevant also today: “the world has changed a lot in the last 25 years, but it is likely to change even more in the next 25 years”. I hope you will be quoting me in 25 years, like I quoted Charles Handy ☺!

One of the most important impacts of changes in the context of equality is that the location of workplace is no longer primary. Much of work can be done as remote working, teleworking. The corona period showed that **it is also possible to make politics as remote work** (and it is also environmentally friendly either). It enables women to return to the labour market much earlier in the period when they are raising young children and to be more competitive with their male colleagues. We also have to think of ways for creating possibilities for parents of young children to participate in “in person” meetings with their children. I believe that this would also contribute to reducing the pay gap that results from staying at home for long periods.

Taking these changes into account, it can be said in conclusion that equality between men and women does not necessarily mean a 50:50 ratio. There are fields of life where men are better and there are fields of life where women are more successful. If we **interfere** in this with gender quotas, we will undermine the end result and the aim. That would be a mistake. This can take place only in very exceptional cases.

At the same time, however, administrative, as well as material, advantages for or obstacles to equal competition that are based on gender must be removed. And if anyone has doubts, let us think again about the focus of the Assembly: if we want peace, we must make more room for women in politics. I want peace,

and therefore I also support ... greater representation of women in politics. The good example for that can be found here, in Rwanda. Let us learn from the best.

And last but not least: my speech would not be complete if I, on behalf of the delegation of the Riigikogu, the national parliament of Estonia, did not express our full support and unfortunately also sympathy to the Ukrainians, the bravest nation in the world, in their fight against the Russian aggression. For the peace in the whole world. Let's never forget that the Ukrainians are fighting for the peace in the whole world.

Thank you for your attention!